

SweatFree Procurement Forum for Purchasing Officials
Conference Call #2 Minutes
April 24, 2008

Present:

Betty Lamoreau, State of Maine
Mark Rosaaen, City of San Francisco
Byron Johnson, City of Austin
Joe Signoretta, State of New Jersey, on behalf of Alice Small
Farshid Yazdi, City of Los Angeles
Marc Monforte, Los Angeles Unified School District
Cheryl Oliva, City of Milwaukee
Jack Jackson, State of California
Greg Hopkins, State of Oregon
Henry Oyekanmi, City of Berkeley
Michael Kochan, Cuyahoga County, Ohio
Bob Carrick, Cuyahoga County, Ohio
Carmen Herrera, City of San Francisco
Monica Wilkes, New York State
Vicki Kaplan, SweatFree Communities, facilitator, note taker
Nancy Steffan, Worker Rights Consortium, guest presenter

Topic: Lessons learned from the first official investigation of a factory producing for U.S. cities.

Farshid Yazdi from the City of Los Angeles and Nancy Steffan of the Worker Rights Consortium presented the findings and results of the WRC's recent investigation of the New Wide Garment factory in Cambodia that produces Williamson-Dickie brand uniforms for the City of Los Angeles. The report is available at:
<http://www.workersrights.org/freports/NewWide.asp>

Mr. Yazdi and Ms. Steffan's presentations are available via PowerPoint at:
<http://www.workersrights.org/linkeddcs/WRC%20and%20Los%20Angeles%20presentation%20on%20New%20Wide%20Garment%20%204-24-08.ppt>

Questions and Answers:

Q: With such a small volume, it's impressive that you found so much cooperation from the factory. How cooperative were they, or did WRC have to apply pressure?

A: They were more cooperative than others we've worked with. One advantage is that Dickies' represented more than 1% of the factory's production. Also, they have contracts with other customers that are concerned about image, such as Nike.

Q: Did you work with local authorities?

A: No. We did work with local organizations to contact workers. We don't generally work with local authorities because of their lack of efficacy in enforcing local labor law; that is a big part of the need for this kind of third-party investigations.

Q: Was forced overtime addressed, or is it being addressed?

A: Factory did develop an overtime consent form. 60 hours a week is pretty standard, meaning 2 hours of overtime per day. Most workers want overtime

work because the pay is so low. Factory did make accommodations for pregnant workers, such as ergonomic heating and permission to leave the factory 5 minutes early.

Q: What is the vision? Where would you like to see this going through a Consortium arrangement?

A: As we are able to pool our purchasing power, we'd like to see clothing produced in a set of factories that have been approved as meeting our standards. These factories would then produce primarily for our market. Consortium would ID vendors that are willing to meet our standards, then vendors would ID a set of factories that will do the work in exchange for more stable prices and more stable orders.

Comment: This would then deliver cost efficiencies, by driving administrative and overhead costs down. We could then funnel those savings into decent working conditions.

Q: Our state has prison/inmate labor producing apparel. Would inmate populations be considered automatically exempt, or is there a position on that yet?

A: Varies from state to state.

Q: What were the steps taken to find the New Wide factory information?

A: We contacted the vendors and asked them for the disclosure information after the city had laid that out in the ordinance. We work primarily on behalf of universities, which have been collecting this info for the past seven years, so we followed our best practices.

Q: Were there other subcontractors besides Williamson-Dickie and Gall's who you had to go through?

A: LA contracts with Gall's (in Long Beach, CA), who contracts with Dickies. We got the info directly from Dickies. There is also a sourcing agent, but we got the info from Dickies.

Q: Was there a line item for the WRC investigation? How is it paid for?

A: The City's contract with our suppliers does not have any line item to talk about City's monitoring contract with WRC and how it is being budgeted. However, our Sweat-Free Ordinance allows the City to sign a contract with an independent company (WRC) for monitoring. In fact, the Ordinance calls for the City to take such a step. So the contract with WRC is separately budgeted.

A: Part of the LAUSD language includes that the district reserves the right to send representatives to do the inspection, and the contractor covers the costs associated. Part of our problem has been finding the funding to do the enforcement, which is why we are interested in this kind of cooperation, and why we included the stipulation that the contractor covers the cost.

Next call: Thursday, May 22, 4 pm EDT/3 pm CDT/2 pm MDT/1 pm PDT

Call 218-486-1600

Access number: 873 5625

Possible topics include:

- listing prospective manufacturers that are more likely to comply

- wage and labor standards
- uniform language/shared database of affidavits